

heritage

his people were farmers
Bohemians I think
Austria-Hungary
early this century.

he came over to avoid
the war
though not much was said
of that
& there was that picture
a young man, handsome
hair slicked down
handlebar mustache
dark uniform
all those medals.

worked in a factory here
a tanner, tool & die
maker, I don't know
not much said of that
either.

not much said of anything
really, especially
the old country
Czechoslovakia now
where he had relatives
he couldn't write
memories I guess
he never spoke of.

in the kitchen
playing cards with his
thoroughly American sons
he would sometimes
get very drunk
start swearing in Slovak
no one saying anything
him in his seventies
a lean hunk of gristle
swearing, shaking his head
pounding his fist
on the table.

& on his wrist a
faded tattoo
MASARYK
the old spelling.

-- Al Masarik

New Castle, DE